Measures to promote handicrafts and handloom weaving Industry

2360. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that handicrafts and handloom weaving industry in the country has been dropped out of the mainstream development agenda;

(b) whether Government are aware of the fact that millions of artisans in India are forced to remain in the backwaters of market economy as the craft clusters of India are still outside the mainstream marketing infrastructure; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to improve the market access of crafts in the country?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI SHANKERSINH VAGHELA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. Market Support Services is implemented as one of the priority areas for promotion and development of the handicraft sector. Under the Marketing Support Services Scheme and Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana (AHVY), assistance is made available to organize marketing events *viz.* National Handicrafts Expos, Crafts Bazaars and Exhibitions, Fairs and Festivals at strategic locations throughout the country, in which the artisans are invited to sell their products directly. Assistance is also provided for creating marketing infrastructure such as setting up of Urban Haats, Emporia etc. through various agencies, to provide permanent marketing outlets to the artisans.

Further emphasis is also being laid towards promotion of export of handicrafts clusters through increased participation in International fairs/ exhibitions abroad, tapping new unexplored markets, product diversification as per market demand, improved quality and packaging, aggressive publicity etc.